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A SOLEMN CALL to a Regard of  
DIVINE PROVIDENCES.

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A  
SERMON

693.e.5  
6

Preached in

CARTER-LANE,

December 18. 1745.

Being the DAY

Appointed by the GOVERNMENT

For a

SOLEMN FAST.

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By THOMAS NEWMAN.

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BY THOMAS W. HENRY

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## MICAHA vi. 9.

*The Lord's voice crieth unto the City  
(and the man of wisdom shall see thy  
name) Hear ye the rod, and who  
hath appointed it.*

**I**F we may judge of the importance of a Message by the solemnity of its introduction, that which this Prophet was to deliver hath the fullest Claim to such a character, and consequently demands the highest regard. It is not only stiled *the Word of the Lord*, which every Message by a commissioned Prophet was, but here is a very solemn Summons of attention, grounded upon this Assurance, that *God was coming out of his place, in order to tread upon the high places of the Earth\**. Every one sees that this expression is not to be understood literally: Since, so to be understood, it would be absolutely unsuitable to a Being who is essentially every where present: Who for that reason cannot strictly be said to come out of one place; and come down to another. But the Expression very strongly describes a full determination of the Divine Will for the *manifestation* of his Presence and his Power,

\* Chap. i. 2, 3.



by an *extraordinary* act of Judgment. His *coming out of his place* declares great provocation on a people's part, and the highest resentment on God's, as if he could no longer bear, but was determined to proceed with them in a way he had not yet done, and from a Throne of Mercy to ascend a Throne of Judgment, displaying his Power *from thence*.

The persons to whom this Message was immediately sent by the Prophet were those of *Samaria* and *Jerusalem*, including the whole body of the *Jews*; as the former was the chief City of the ten tribes, and the latter of the two tribes, after their division. But to *us also* was this word of the Lord sent, for our direction, admonition, and warning. We may from God's method of proceeding with the *Jews*, as a nation, draw some general rules, on which we may with confidence rely, for the government of our hopes and fears in our *national* capacity, for the preventing of Judgments, ready to be poured forth, and for the procuring the interposition and favour of Heaven under pressing emergencies. God's proceedings with the *Jews*, amidst all that was peculiar in their case, yield *us* the best instructions for the forming our expectations from God, under the different aspect of our circumstances, under the different tenor of our behaviour, and what he expects from a nation in order to secure his Patronage.



It is not in the least improbable, that what appears to us to be a *continued* message of a Prophet to a particular people, was not delivered *entirely* at one time, but at some distances of time. We find the former Chapter hath a great many encouraging promises in it, to evidence how unwilling God was to execute his threatnings, and how much more desirous he was of their repentance than destruction, tho' he was, as it were, come out of his place to display his power by punishment. But, as if these methods and assurances of Mercy had failed of their Effect, tho' he waited for their kindly influences, suspended the execution of his threatnings, the Prophet proceeds in this Chapter to the other method, which was the only one left, viz. to summon their solemn attention to an approaching Judgment, as the consequence of a controversy that God had with them. *Hear ye now*, not what I say, but what the Lord saith by me, *he hath a controversy with his people*, and *he will plead with Israel*\*: He hath just and abundant cause of contending with them, and he will prosecute his action against them: At the same time, for the fuller conviction both of the righteousness, and even *necessity* of his pleading with them by Judgments, he appeals to them, and movingly expostulates with them, by a recital of the case, and alleging the ground of his proceedings†. To this controversy, and the determined prosecu-

\* Ver. 1, 2.

† Ver. 3, 4, 5.

tion of it, the text refers : *The Lord's voice crieth to the city, &c.* In which words there are two things, which I shall principally enlarge upon. Here is,

I. A solemn assertion, or a declaration of an awful fact.

II. The duty and interest of those to whom it was made.

I. Here is a solemn assertion, or a declaration of an awful fact. *The Lord's voice crieth unto the city.* This I take to be, a declaration of the Prophet made to the *Jews*, respecting the threatnings he had denounced against them, and the Judgments, which as a Divine Herald, he had proclaimed : He solemnly assures them, that the Lord cried to them thereby.

We at this day have no such *expresses* from Heaven, foretelling or assuring of the Divine Designs towards us, either as to Mercy or Judgment, or to testify that such and such sins were the cause of such Judgments : We have no messengers so instructed and commissioned as the *Jews* had. But, from our being intelligent and rational, we are capable of discerning the Divine Mind from God's providential acts and dispensations. Reason and natural Conscience tell us, that God speaks to mankind as really by his Providences, as by his Word ; and by threatnings, as by actual executions.

tions. It may in many cases *now* be as justly asserted, that the Lord's voice crieth to the city by his works, and it ought to be equally regarded, as when more immediate messengers were employ'd to ascertain it.

The text saith, his Voice sometimes *crieth* to the city. *i. e.* the call is very loud; it is an alarm; the Warning in the Providence is very shrill; the Presages of evil are very strong; the cloud is very full, and ready to burst; and the hand of God therein is very apparent. This expression points to those *awakening* notices of God's Agency and Anger, which particular Providences carry in them, with respect to particular Places. Like those fiery Meteors, or glaring Comets, whose unusual appearances much more loudly proclaim the Author of Nature to the generality of mankind, than the whole host of Heaven in its more stated Appearances. Some Providences, compared with others, are like the sounding of a trumpet; they startle, they carry something of a summons to the mind in their very aspect, and in the most awakening manner declare both the Finger and Displeasure of God.

Further; this Voice of God is said to be directed *to the City*. This plainly implies two things: *viz.* That all in that community or city are accessary to the threatning they are under: and that they are all concerned in the warning thereby given.

1. When



1. When it is said that God's voice crieth *to the city*, it strongly intimates, that all in that Place, or in that community, are accessory to the threatening they are under. We know in general, that both threatnings and executions in the Course of Providence are the effect of transgressions, or that sin is the cause of suffering: But our blessed Lord hath forbid us making it a standing rule, "that the most remarkable sufferers are the greatest sinners \*." And indeed the Case of *Job* is a standing confutation of such a sentiment. The voice of the Lord crying to a *city* or a *nation* by threatnings that affect *the whole*, is upon the account of a *national* guilt: *i. e.* upon the account of notorious iniquities, generally practised, encouraged, or at least connived at, by those who have power and authority to suppress and punish them. But tho' the threatening may *reach all* in the Community, it by no means saith they are *equally guilty*. However, of this we are certain, that every one in a city hath such a degree of personal guilt, they are so far contributors to the national sum, that they may and ought to look upon themselves as accessaries to a general danger. Of some in a threatned city to be sure it may be said, that the voice did not come for their sakes, or upon their account: on the contrary, had the spirit and behaviour of the community been like theirs, God would not have proclaimed a con-

\* Luke xiii. 4, 5.

troverſy with the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless, when the terror and danger is general, and the whole city is intereſted in it, it is a Declaration of *universal* guilt, and a call to every individual to enquire and aſk themſelves, what they have done\*; and their ſhare of guilt will juſtify Providence in the intereſt they have in the common danger.

2. By God's voice crying *to the city*, we may underſtand, that *all* in that city are concerned in the warning thereby given. If the cloud ſhould immediately hang over, or break upon, one part of a Kingdom, yet ſurely Providence ſpeaks to the *whole* thereby. Nay, thoſe who only *bear* of awful diſpenſations, ſhould look upon themſelves as called to by the ſame voice as cries more loudly to others: How much more ſhould they, who are likely to be equally affected by an impending calamity, think themſelves addreſſed to in the warning? In this caſe, the voice of Providence is as immediately directed to them, as if the threatning was entirely perſonal: the application is really to every individual, as if each were ſingly addreſſed to, and each one is called upon to take it to themſelves, and to make it their own caſe. Though many may be exempted as to conſequences, yet if the threatning be general, the voice of God is directed to all: and every one is under a Religious obligation to attend the cry,

\* Jer. viii. 6.

and to hearken to what God the Lord shall speak.  
Which brings me to the

II. The duty and interest of those to whom the former declaration was made. *Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.* This was the word of God in the mouth of his messenger; or rather, this was the language of those threatnings *Jerusalem* lay under, the proper improvement of them, and the means to prevent their execution. These latter words contain two articles, which deserve a particular consideration.

The first is, we are to *bear the rod*. By *rod* here I think we are not to understand a common trouble of life, but something that carries a special mark of the divine displeasure in it: it is not a chastisement or a stripe, but what the Scripture styles, the *sword* of the Lord: it is not a meer rebuke, but a pleading against a city with his *strong* Power: it was not intended for correction, but for destruction; or, an heavy Judgment in part executed, whilst the awful remainder was hanging over them—But what are we to understand by *bearing* the rod?

This assures us, that Providences have a language; that they are sent on a message; and since they are means that an all-wise God makes use of, we are confident they are in their nature adapted to subserve his end. If we are to hear, *they must speak*: and so they do, to the understandings and consciences



## *Regard of Divine Providences.* II

consciences of reasonable creatures, as plainly as an articulate voice could convey a message to their ears. And from this our capacity of hearing and understanding them, we are under equal obligations to observe and obey the Providences, as the word of God. I grant, there may be some things in the dispensations of Providence that we cannot discern, depths which we cannot fathom, there may be some reasons and relations we can never find out with all our Searches, which may be designedly reserved for the State of perfect light and enjoyment to discover, as a considerable part of its felicity. But, since in these Cases we are not spoke to, we are not bound to hear: we are only required to regard what is plain, not to find out what is concealed; we are only to attend to God's works, not to fathom his counsels; and to take notice of what he manifests, not to penetrate what he hath veiled from us. As to the divine threatenings and executions, to which the text refers, surely *they* speak loud and plain enough! At least there is much in them that is so, which the reason of our own minds may discern and interpret. These then we are justly called upon to hear, *i. e.* to attend to and regard: for then only are things seen or heard as they ought to be by reasonable creatures, when they are considered and improved. Now by *bearing* the rod two things principally may be understood: *viz.* the most careful attention to the instructions thereby conveyed; and a faithful compliance with what is thereby demanded.

1. To *bear* the rod is carefully to attend to the instructions and lessons thereby conveyed. The Providences of God are a very considerable confirmation of his word, and his word is the best interpreter of his Providences. By those I am now speaking of, described in the text by *his rod*, or such as are the threatnings and presages of ruin to a *people* as such there are several very *important truths* ascertained and proclaimed, which those who have ears to hear may and ought to hear. For instance :

They assure us that God is angry, and coming forth against a People : They are as the lifting up of his Hand, and the laying hold of Vengeance ; or as *Moses* strongly expresses it, they are *the whetting of his Sword*, or preparing for the Execution of his Judgments \*. They are a *sensible* revelation of his wrath from Heaven.—These Providences teach us also the *cause* of his anger : that it is from ourselves, and that our sins are the provocation. Because of the evil done by us is evil pronounced against us. The *Jews* are several times brought in by the Prophets, making enquiry, or demanding the cause of the threatnings denounced, and the sufferings inflicted upon them. And how is the case resolved ? Why, not by stopping their mouths with an arbitrary sovereignty in God, or by telling them, that it was the will of

\* Deut. xxxii. 41.

## *Regard of Divine Providences. 13*

God, and that that was reason sufficient; but,  
“that it was for the greatness of their iniquities;  
“that it was for what they had done against him  
“that he thus denounced and proceeded against  
“them \*.” Sin is so evidently the cause of suffering from Providence, that natural Conscience, if not stupified, sends us to the one as the reason of the other: It calls our sins to our remembrance, and of its self tells us *why* God strikes. And therefore when a *nation* is under the frowns of Providence, the reflection is as natural to *all* in that nation, who have not lost their senses and their understandings, “that it is on the account of a *national* iniquity that God is angry.” This is solemnly *owned* and *acknowledged* from the *Throne*, it is *subscribed* to by the *King* and *his council*, in the command issued out for our assembling here this day—Hereupon, another thing that such Providences loudly proclaim is, that by our vices we more certainly and effectually bring ruin upon our country, than could be done by any other means; or, that by prevailing indulged iniquity we are the worst enemies to our selves. This such Providences teach, at the same time that they proclaim the anger of God against a people, and that the sins of that people are the cause of that anger. Who can dispute whether God is greater than man? Whether the Lord of Hosts can do more than instruments? Whether a Being of absolute and unlimited Power, from whom all Power is de-

\* Jer. xiii. 22.



rived, by whom all malice is restrained, and by whose permission every design and purpose is bounded, is not a Guardian and Ally infinitely preferable to all others put together? As indisputable must it be, whether by our vices we do not pull down a ruin upon our selves and our country, more certain and absolute, than all other means united could effect. It is a very remarkable and pertinent passage of sacred history. *Balak* the King of *Moab*, being afraid of the children of *Israel*, who were very numerous, who lay encamped very near him, and were remarkable for their victorious arms, applies himself to *Balaam* to curse *Israel*, or to pronounce a curse upon them in the name of God; which, as *Balaam* bore the name of a Prophet, he was fully persuaded would take place, and thereby render him more than a match for them. This *Balaam* was very ready to engage in, for the sake of an unlimited reward offered him: But he declares to the King, he could not comply with his request; for since there was no idolatry, nor heinous wickedness amongst the people of *Israel*, they were the objects of the Divine blessing and favour, against which it was impossible for any human curse to prevail. This method being absolutely ineffectual, whilst at the same time, thro' his covetousness, he could not forego the reward, he meditates an expedient that would answer *Balak's* wish and his own covetousness too: that was, "to entice the children of *Israel* to iniquity, to seduce them into some heinous sins, even to lewdness and idolatry."

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This being done brought an *effectual* curse upon them : This did the business at once : This separated between *Israel* and their God, and involved them in a destruction, which all the arts, power, and execrations of their enemy was not able to effect. Now is not the nature and character of vice as fully declared by such dispensations of Providence, as words could do it ? Do not they teach us what Apprehensions we ought always to have of it ? And what are they ? But those which the Word of God directs us to form ; *viz.* that it is an *evil* and *bitter* thing \* : A thing to be detested and dreaded : To be detested for its nature, and dreaded for its consequences : And it is the intrinsic evil of its nature that renders its consequences so bitter—Now, if we *bear* the divine rod according to the demand in the text, our minds should be under the most fixed penetrating influence of these truths : the very heart should feel their force and virtue ; and our Persuasion of them should be so full as to render them principles of action. Which leads to the

2. The *bearing* the rod doth also imply, a faithful and dutiful compliance with what is thereby required and demanded. And what doth God call for by the voice of his alarming threatnings, or his smarting executions, in the Course of his Providence, but for the same that he requires by the voice of his word ? ? *viz.* that we should so

\* Jer. ii. 19.

hear and attend to the evil that he seems to purpose against us, that we may return *every one* from our evil ways, that he may forgive our iniquity and our sin \*. His rebukes, his judgments, rising from lesser to greater, are to reduce us to our allegiance to himself, to influence our return to him. When his Judgments are abroad in the earth, they call upon *all*, much more upon those who are *immediately* visited, to learn righteousness : To bring us back to an obedience to his law, wherein we have renounced and turned away from it † : By repentance to renew the peace that was broke, to recover the friendship that was lost : In short, the fruit, the intention of all is, to take away sin || ; to mortify the habits, and bring us off from the practice of it. These are God's *designs* when he warns and wounds, when he threatens to make a full end of a city and people : These are the *demands* of Providence, that we open our ear to discipline and return from iniquity §. Surely a reasonable creature can never be said to *bear* what God the Lord shall say, unless it *obeys* it ! Since the very voice carries a command in it. Under such dispensations it is directed to *each*, and the demand of an obedient attention is made upon *every individual*, to whom the Providence reaches. It is a demand upon *every one* to reflect seriously upon their own conduct ; to search out and give up the iniquity they have indulged ; to attend to

\* Jer. xxxvi. 3.

|| Isa. xxvii. 9.

† Neh. ix. 26, 29.

§ Job xxxvi. 10.



## Regard of Divine Providences. 17

the truths they have disregarded; to perform the duties they have neglected; to throw up the presumptions and fond security whereby they have set Providence itself at defiance—But, as the text doth, I must proceed to something farther.

The voice of God in his Providence not only cries to a city, or people, to attend to the *language and design* of the rod, but likewise seriously to consider, *who hath appointed it*. This seems added to give a weight and importance to the dispensation, *additional* to what it may have in itself, and to enforce the reason of our attention to the voice that speaks to us thereby. Now for the better discerning the import, and experiencing the influence of the expression, I would hint a few things.

Let us then under penal Providences consider, *that they are appointed*. They do not arise out of the dust, nor spring out of the ground: They are no casual productions, no accidental things; nor are they the meer result of a train of second causes; but *by order* of a superintending sovereign. If the King of *Affyria* invades *Israel*, and lays waste their country, he is therein *the rod of God's anger*: i. e. he is employed by him; he is an instrument in the divine hand, *appointed* to do what he did, as far as he was a scourge to *Israel*: but he was *only* an instrument, though he thought not so. God sent him, he gave him the charge to  
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take the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread his people down as mire in the street \*. It is by no means sufficient either for the honour of Providence, or for our Benefit by smarting dispensations, to take notice only of the *facts*, and to make them the subject of conversation; but they are to be considered as *the works of God, and the operations of his hand*. Whoever are the immediate Agents, God should be looked to as having *ordained them for Judgment, and established them for correction* †. They may propose and consult nothing but the gratifying their own passions, but what they do effect is by a real commission, and is under an actual direction and limitation, from above. The word we render who hath *appointed* it, some render, who *calls for it*. And thus when God determined the ruin of his peoples enemy, it is expressed, *I will call for a sword against him* ||. The familiarity of the expression doth more strongly confirm the truth intended by it, *viz.* that what befel them was by actual appointment and ordination of God, in pursuance of his design, as if forces had been literally mustered, and sent by express order. If God doth not send and appoint the rod, it can bring us no message from him: and if we leave his agency, his immediate hand and order, out of the dispensations, which, as a nation, we meet with, they

\* Isaiah x. 5, 6.

† Habak. i. 12.

|| Ezek. xxxviii. 21. Jer. l. 29.

## *Regard of Divine Providences.* 19

are not like to have any rational influence, or make any Religious impressions on us. But farther, we are also to consider,

*Who appoints these rods.* And here, those who know the divine name, must know—He is one who is perfectly Just; and hath always right on his side: and therefore, whenever the rod is appointed, it is richly deserved by those whose lot it is—He is Almighty; and therefore can make good his threatnings whatever they import, and bring to pass whatever he hath denounced: yea, whatever he hath already inflicted, he can send much more—He is perfectly Good, and delights not to punish; and therefore the provocation must be very great, and the conduct very evil in itself, where the discipline is severe—He is Sincere, and in good earnest; his threatnings declaring the real intention of his mind, and the purpose of his heart: from hence it is at our peril to trifle with him when under his judicial hand—Finally: He who appoints the rod is one who acts always for the wisest and noblest ends, even for his own glory in the good of his creatures; and for this reason he cannot, he will not, be defeated: from hence, if he is not glorified by his rod in the reformation of those designed to be reclaimed by it, he will glorify himself by the destruction of such at length, how long soever it may be suspended. This is He who appoints the rod; and it is only as this his name



is considered and attended to ; that his wife and gracious design will be answered, the benefit of his dispensations be received, and the execution of his threatnings prevented — The truths in the text thus represented, I hope hath been the preparation of the mind for a particular application of them to ourselves, suitably to our present circumstances, and our assembling here this day for very solemn work, by order from the Throne. The heads I shall enlarge on by way of application shall be those suggested in the text. And here I would engage both you and myself seriously to reflect, and to put the following Questions to ourselves.

1. Hath not the Divine voice cried very loud of late to this City and this Kingdom ? I do not mention this as if I supposed any could be ignorant of the fact, or had forgotten it, but to open your minds with my own for the receiving the impressions, which it is designed and adapted to produce. God hath for months past been speaking to us, by letting loose upon us a gang of desperate Ruffians, who have thrown off all the principles and laws of their nature, the ties and sympathies of humanity, and have been wholly actuated by a brutal resolution, through all hazards to destroy and ruin their country, or to perish in the attempt. Creatures they are, who could wade unrelentingly through any sea of blood to accomplish their enterprize : Which when accomplished,

ed, as every single fact in history, and as the dreadful experience of this nation testifies, was, and could be nothing but the tragical stripping us of our Religion, the peremptory demand of our Consciences, the destruction of our King and his family, with the abolishing of all those laws, from whence we have the security of life, property, and liberty, against the attempts of such desperate Wretches and Ruffians, as now threaten them. And this was to be accomplished, and would have been effectually done, by imposing one upon us as our Sovereign, whom we have *in our own defence* abjured; who can *possibly* be nothing but a curse to the nation; who hath never *seen* any Religion but the grossest superstition, impieties, and idolatrous fooleries; who hath never *known* any thing of Laws, but arbitrary will, nor any thing of Government, but absolute Tyranny; nor hath a *notion* of any liberty belonging to subjects, but the liberty of a single choice, Turn or Burn, Comply or Die. When we thus consider the instruments employed, with the design itself, surely the voice of the Lord cried very loud to the Kingdom; and the Providence must be allowed to merit the name of a Rod: For such was its very nature, that in the Prophets language, the Lord opened his armoury or treasury, and by allotting that dispensation for us, brought out the *weapons of his indignation* \*. But, it was louder still from

\* Jer. 1. 25.

some very singular circumstances attending the Providence, which it is probable will scarcely be credited by the next generation, tho' History transmits it most faithfully to them. Such are the speed of their marches under the greatest disadvantages; the continuance of them under very great difficulties; the maintenance of their spirit and the vigor of their resolution under many discouragements, particularly when they knew a much superior force was out against them; their eluding and baffling of this, time after time; despising the opposition that a national Power could make against them; as if they had really acted by a Divine commission in what they did; and going thro' such an incredible fatigue, as if Providence had qualified them, vastly beyond what nature did, for their enterprize: As we read some instruments of old were qualified, when the ruin of a provoking people was absolutely determined; which is thus strongly and elegantly expressed: *None shall be weary or stumble amongst them; none shall slumber nor sleep: The girdle of their loins shall not be loosed, from any need of rest or relaxation: Nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: i. e.* They should meet with nothing to be an interruption to their progress\*. I own, from these and other like circumstances, it is the loudest cry of Providence that ever I heard, respecting the Kingdom; and seemed to me very much like a

\* Isa. v. 27.



## Regard of Divine Providences. 23

declaration, that our Rock had sold us, and our God had given us up. For some time Providence seemed to bid us prepare for their absolute success, as what should be the event. The threatening was very alarming; the aspect of affairs was as if God had taken the rod into his own hand, or had armed those with his own vengeance, whose Power *in itself* might not have been great; but when mustered and commissioned by him, capable of accomplishing any thing. It's demonstrable, and indisputable with those who believe a Providence, that the very same hand that can *save*, can also *destroy*, by *few* as by *many*. Let us not therefore judge of things by their appearances, but as they are in the hands of God; who can work by any means, or qualify any to subserve his designs. It's true, these enemies of ours have not been permitted to reach *this city*; but we know there was a general apprehension that they would; and what did every mind feel that was under the apprehension? And did not the voice of Providence reach as far as the danger and terror extended?

2. What Attention hath been given to this Voice? I do not ask whether we have *felt* the Rod, as brutes might do, but whether we *heard its language* as men should do. I know by far the generality of the Kingdom have been under great fears: Nor indeed is it any evidence of the goodness of the understanding, or of the disposition  
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of the mind, to have been absolutely unconcerned: But, terrors under the apprehensions of great danger amount to no more, than the howlings of the animal under the whip. Many, no doubt, have been sent to Ejaculations, or to more solemn prayers to God: In trouble, instinct alone will prompt us to address to Heaven. But we should carry our enquiries much further, with respect to the attention and regard we give to the voice of God in his Providence.

We have taken notice of the instruments, and of the wretched Villainies they have been committing through their progress: But have we seen and acknowledged the *Divine hand* therein? That what they did was by God's permission, and as far as they have been a scourge to us, that it may be said, *the Lord brought them against us* \*. Whatever are the means, our principal attention and regard is demanded for and due to him, whose Kingdom ruleth over all, who dispenseth all the Power that any instruments have, and absolutely directs, controuls, and limits it, as may be most subservient to his All-wise and Righteous designs. We have been exasperated against our enemies, we have felt a glowing indignation in our own breasts against them; and with the greatest reason: But have we humbled ourselves under the mighty hand of God †? Have we so

\* Isa. xlii. 3, 4, 5

† 1 Pet. v. 6.

heard

heard his Rod, as to be sensible it was sent to plead against us, and was a testimony of his displeasure? For, it can never be allowed, that in visiting a Kingdom with *such* a dispensation as we have been lately under, a dispensation so big with woe and wretchedness, God hath no regard to desert; or that by the greatness of the plague threatned, he did not *intend* to call our attention to the greatness of our transgression. If we have duely regarded the Divine voice, nothing could have been more natural nor just, than the reflection and enquiry that the prophet puts into the mouth of the *Jews*, *Who gave us so far for a spoil, and so far into the hands of the robbers? Did not the Lord? He against whom we had sinned?* Hereby instructing them in the language of the Providences they were under; which, amongst other things, was to acknowledge God as the supream Agent therein, and also that he had a regard to their guilt in the evil of his dispensations—Finally, if we would duely regard the Divine voice in the late alarming Providence, we should particularly enquire into the sins which are more especially pointed to thereby, and into the measure of guilt that falls to our own share in those respects. The nature and circumstances of the punishment oftentimes direct the thoughts to *particular crimes*. If threatnings in general call us to consider our general way and course, those,

• Isa. xlii. 24.

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which



which are accompanied with peculiar circumstances, call us to reflect upon those acts which such dispensations seem more immediately to reprove us for. From the late Providential alarm, and the invasion in favour of Popery, which, had it been successful, would at once have involved all our Privileges, Civil and Sacred, in sure and certain ruin, we are more *directly* called to reflect upon our neglect of our *Religious advantages*; the slight we have put upon the Gospel of *Jesus*; that glorious light, that perfect rule, that summary of inestimable truth; and upon our contempt of *Christian institutions*, as we Protestants may enjoy them. We should reflect particularly on our most scandalous abuses of *liberty*, by our senseless factions, our groundless and unnatural, as well as unchristian, divisions; by our wicked wanton murmurings against God and Man. These and such like crimes we are loudly called upon to consider and amend, by the late Providence, threatening to introduce Popery amongst us, which is *wholly* and *originally* calculated to extirpate Conscience and Liberty, wherever it prevails: and in such ways as these only do we rationally and religiously attend to such a rod as we have for some time been under, and to that hand and agency that hath appointed it.

3. Let us enquire, what change the voice of God in his dispensations hath made amongst us. If they are the voice of God, and the operations of

## *Regard of Divine Providences.* 27

of his hands, they have a wise and kind design, and they are adapted to answer it: they have an indisputable authority, and should have a powerful efficacy. And upon what errand can they be supposed to come, if not for our amendment and reformation? For what are the divine threatenings intended? but to prevent the execution of the divine Judgments. Was the Nation in a circumstance before to *deserve* this and other heavy dispensations, as the Proclamation from the Throne declares? And is there the least abatement of our demerit? Is there one profane oath or direful curse the less? Hath one single School of vice, one Nursery of debauchery been discountenanced and discouraged? Or hath any one more breast received the intended conviction in any influencing degree, that the safety and prosperity of our dear country depends upon the favour of Providence? Yea, let those of us whose hearts have been professedly trembling for the ark of God, as well as for our lives and liberties, ask ourselves, Whether the divine rod hath drove out one article of foolishness, or in any instance hath amended heart and life? Do we find our love to the divine service and worship in the least increased, or any greater solicitude to secure the divine friendship in order to our personal and national felicity, from a deeper and a more riveted sense of our dependance upon God for both? Have our Prayers to God on behalf of our King and Country ministred any thing to a *principle*

of Religion, to a *following* the practice, or was it only performed to answer an immediate exigency, and to serve ourselves of our Maker? If there is no change as to Piety and Profane-ness, Virtue and Vice, in a national view, which can be done only by a personal amendment; surely the voice of God hath not been heard in his late threatnings! Our *Jerusalem* hath not yet received instruction: but oh! what must be the consequences of this! My Fellow Christians and Protestants, remember, tho' there is some abatement at present as to the visible grounds of fear, yet the anger of God is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out *still*: His voice *still* cries; his threatnings are *still* continued: And if by repentance and reformation we do nothing towards the turning away his wrath, it may, and most probably will, be turned against us in a much greater degree, and burn till it hath consumed us. What we have already suffered was intended to save us from heavier calamities; our universal confusion was to prevent as universal a destruction. If then when God lifts up his hand we *will* not see, there is great reason to expect, he will determine to *make* us see\*: if we proceed in our disobedience to him, he will proceed in his controversy with us, by adding one Judgment to another. We have lately found that our distresses may very *suddenly* arise to a very great height, even to

\* Isa. xxvi. 11.



## *Regard of Divine Providences.* 29

the mocking and insulting over all the means of redress, tho' very considerable: In this case, doubtless, the *principles* of Religion, such as the Power, Providence, and Promises of God, the universal sway and dominion of the most High over all causes and events, who knows all things and can do all things, and against whom no might, no counsels, no wisdom can prevail—These *principles*, I say, are the very best support of the mind in times of general as well as personal distress: But what relieving influence can the *principles* of Religion have without the *practice* of it? What power or virtue can be derived from the existence of such a Being and such a Providence, without the hopes of an interest therein, or that we are a people that such a Providence delights to favour, for whom it is engaged to appear, and of whom, we have reason to believe, it would be for his Glory to be the Guardian and Defence? The more Piety and Virtue therefore prevail in a nation, the more sure is their interest in the Divine Providence; an Ally we may in every exigency unsollicitously depend upon, and God being with us we naturally dismiss our fears, and warrantably triumph over every threat and opposition without us. Methinks, as every passenger in the ship is concerned in the safety of the vessel, there is nothing more natural than a love to our country: and there is nothing that a love of our Country should more naturally lead us to, than the cultivating Religion in our selves, and the

the endeavouring the prevalency of it thro' the land. We may associate ourselves together, but we may be soon broken to pieces; we may take counsel together, but it may come to nought. But if God blesses, what can blast? Courage arising from constitution hath very often forsaken men when they had most need of it; and God can, as he hath done, judicially make the heart to melt, and the spirit to fail\*. But the fortitude that is produced by the principle of Religion, by a Dependence on Providence, and an Interest in it, is of all other the most settled and fixed. Oh! that that *endeared* Prince, whom God hath in love to our nation set over us, who hath shewn such a love and regard to his people, and hath so wisely and faithfully employed the Power and Confidence reposed in him, for the ease, safety, and happiness of the Kingdom! Oh! that that *wise* and *happy* people, who have lately shewn such an almost unexampled love and regard to their Prince, and therein to their country! who have been equally threatened by an enemy enviously enraged at their mutual bliss—Oh that that Prince and that People, I say, might but unite their hearts and hands for a personal and general Reformation, pursuant to the voice of the late Providence, in which they have been *equally* concerned, and by which they are *equally* called upon thereto! Let us not from the surprising Goodness we have

expe-

experienced, so much the reverse to our own fears, and to our enemies hopes, dare to say, *the bitterness of Death is past*; and from thence lose the impressions that have been made, and drop the solicitous sense we had of the need and worth of the divine favour when under extremities; lest we see a *more* doleful scene of confusion and amazement, and from that same quarter too: but let us hear the rod, and who hath appointed it; observing the hand of God therein, with the display of his anger against our sins; and improving both, by a becoming humiliation for them, and an habitual forsaking them: so that what hath hitherto been comparatively only our correction, may not the next time prove the destruction, both of Us and our King.

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